

EL GRECO'S 'PIETA' SOLD TO NIARCHOS

Ship Owner Gets Painting of
Christ—The Metropolitan
Museum to Exhibit It

By SANKA KNOX

One of El Greco's most famous paintings was sold a few days ago to Stravros S. Niarchos.

The purchaser is a Greek citizen whose global shipping operations include ownership of one of the world's two largest tanker fleets.

The picture, a large work measuring 47¼ by 57 inches, is entitled "Pieta" and also has been known as "Deposition." It shows the dying Christ surrounded by the grieving figures of Mary Magdalene and another, probably Joseph.

Within a few days the painting will be put on exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art for several months. It was brought here in 1939 and shown at the New York World's Fair.

The picture was on loan to the fair exhibit from the Comtesse de la Beraudière, and afterward was placed here in safekeeping. It remained in storage until recently. Mr. Niarchos made his purchase from Wildenstein & Company, 19 East Sixty-fourth Street.

There is much speculation among art dealers and others in art circles about the price of the painting. Guesses range, from \$150,000 to \$300,000.

Experts regard "Pieta" as ranking work; some have called it "unique." For, apart from its masterly painting, subtle color and emotional content, the picture is only one of about a half-dozen that were not repeated in the artist's studio.

A fully signed work, "Pieta" is recorded as having been painted in 1550, but some scholars date it a little earlier. El Greco ("the Greek"), who is known as a Spanish painter, was born on the island of Crete as Domenico Theotocopuli in 1542. In Italy, he was a pupil of Titian, but came deeply under the influence of Michelangelo. His "Pieta" shows, in composition, the spell of the Italian master.

The limp figure of Christ, bathed in a golden light, is shown against the soft blue cloak of Mary, whose eyes meet her Son's in a long look. The base of the cross may be made out faintly behind the Virgin, and, above, a blue-gray sky hovers over the scene.

Mr. Niarchos, who came to this country two years ago, is 46 years old. He is a business rival of Aristotle Socrates Onassis. Mr. Niarchos and Mr. Onassis married sisters.

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